

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, April 2, 2008

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Wednesday, April 2, 2008

## Children taken from DPS board member

### Allegations of abuse, neglect prompt state to seek custody of 4 teens, 12-year-old and girl, 2.

**Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News**

**DETROIT** -- A city school board member has lost custody of four of his children amid allegations of abuse and neglect.

Four children were removed from Reverend David Murray's home on March 20 and placed with relatives, following an investigation by state Children's Protective Services. The state also seeks custody of two teens who Murray says currently aren't living with him.

The agency was tipped off by Murray's wife, Tanisha Murray, who said she filed abuse and neglect complaints with the state on Feb. 28.

"The house we were in was not fit for no children to stay in," Tanisha Murray, 35, told The Detroit News. She said she abandoned the family's home on Oak Drive, near Seven Mile and Livernois, after the children were removed.

"The house was deplorable, it was dirty, there's a hole in the ceiling in the living room, there's broken windows, there's a hole in the basement ceiling from water leaking in the kitchen."

Murray, 55, pastor of First Holy Temple Church of God in Christ and a licensed social worker, said he wouldn't discuss the case.

"A couple of the children are emotionally impaired and I don't want to embarrass them. I can't discuss anything pertaining to the children," he said.

Murray's attorney, Cliff Woodards, refused to comment. Two school board members confirmed that Woodards represents the school board on expulsion cases, but he declined to discuss his financial arrangement with Murray.

Wayne County Juvenile Court Referee Leslie Graves determined at a hearing Monday there is enough evidence against Murray to proceed to trial, and he's awaiting a preliminary hearing on April 18 before Judge Mark Slavens to determine whether the children will be made temporary wards of the state. Workers would have to decide whether Murray is making improvements in his living conditions. If not, the state could move to terminate his parental rights.

State child protection workers filed a petition with the Wayne County Juvenile Court on Monday asking that six of Murray's children be made temporary wards of the state: a 2-year-old girl, boys ages 12, 13 and 16, and two 15-year-old boys. The girl is the child of Tanisha and Reverend David Murray and the 13-year-old boy is Tanisha's child from a previous relationship. The other four boys were adopted through the state foster care system.

Murray told child protection workers that one of the 15-year-olds is in a psychiatric facility, but he does not know the name of the facility, according to the petition. He also said that he doesn't know the whereabouts of the other 15-year-old, and has filed with police to have him apprehended.

#### **Food deprivation alleged**

Murray, who legally changed his first name to Reverend, is one of 11 members on the school board that provides oversight for the operations in the 105,000-student school district.

Tanisha Murray, a homemaker, said her husband deprived the family of food even though he received about \$2,000 per month in state adoption subsidies. He earned \$30 per school board meeting, according to school district officials. She said her husband's only other employment is as pastor of his church, which she said has approximately 10 members and does not meet regularly.

"The only thing I can recall him spending money on (for the family to eat) was some kind of hot dogs with bread, pizza, coney island," Tanisha Murray said. "Some of that stuff was hidden in his van."

"When the kids would get up for school we wouldn't have any cereal or anything to eat, so they'd eat at school. Sometimes he'd get out the Frosted Flakes (from his van) after school, and if he didn't do that he would give them \$2 to get snacks at the gas station."

### **A history of complaints**

Reverend David Murray's history with Children's Protective Services dates to 1996 and includes one substantiated complaint of abuse or neglect. The most recent complaint, filed Feb. 28, alleges domestic violence, insufficient food in the home and problems with cleanliness. The petition also says Tanisha Murray is being treated for bipolar disorder.

One state worker who visited the home on Feb. 28 wrote: "The home was observed to be very dirty, with a foul odor. Broken windows were observed throughout the home and a large hole was observed in the living room ceiling."

According to the state's petition, Murray denied living at the home during that worker's visit, and said he actually lives in a house on San Juan. Tanisha Murray told The News that she and her husband both had been living on Oak Drive.

During that visit, the 12-year-old boy told the child protection worker that he slept on the floor near a broken window in the living room and did not have enough food to eat. Another boy, interviewed at his school, told workers that all of the children lived at the Oak Drive address and that the electricity had been turned off at the San Juan house. The boy also told the worker he had to buy his own school uniform, that he and his siblings never have enough food and that there was spoiled food in the kitchen.

A neighbor on Oak Street said about 10 people live in the large brick Tudor-style home, where a black tarp appeared to be covering a hole in the roof Tuesday and several windows were covered with cardboard or with taped cracks.

A foul smell came from two Dumpsters on the front porch.

"As many people as live over there, I always thought it should have looked better," said Toya Baker, 36, who lives across the street. "It's so many teenage boys, I always thought they had foster kids."

Darryl Jefferson, the father of the 13-year-old boy who was removed, said he has been aware of problems at the home for some time, and has been trying to get full custody of his son. He was reluctant to discuss specific details.

"I'm just trying to get my son full custody," Jefferson said. "He's got a mom that's bipolar and she married this man. This is stuff that should have been taken care of before."

### **2nd term on school board**

Murray is serving his second term on the Detroit school board, where he is an at-large member. He was first elected in 1998, just a few months before the state takeover in 1999. His current term began in January 2006.

James McCurtis, spokesman for the state Department of Community Health, said Murray's social work license is current through April 30, 2009.

His license was suspended for disciplinary reasons in 1990. Details on that suspension were not immediately available.

McCurtis said a finding of child abuse or neglect would be considered possible grounds for suspension of a social worker's license.

"It would be considered, absolutely -- it all depends on the details of the case and the outcome," McCurtis said. "Like any other action, there has to be a hearing and due process."

Detroit school board President Carla Scott said she was unaware of the situation with Murray's children and would not comment. She said if the allegations are found to be true, she will have to consult with the district's attorneys for advice on how to proceed.



## Judge expediting trial in child-abuse case

Wednesday, April 02, 2008

By Steven Hepker

shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A judge Tuesday reiterated that Kirk Coleman belongs in jail pending trial for allegedly beating and sexually assaulting his child.

Circuit Judge John McBain also ordered the Michigan State Police crime lab to submit DNA test results within three weeks or he will hold someone's feet to the fire.

A forensic scientist will be ordered to a show-cause hearing April 22 if the test results lag. A pretrial hearing is planned that day. McBain also set June 2 for the start of the jury trial.

Coleman is charged with first-degree criminal sexual conduct and first-degree child abuse.

"This is a capital case with no bond," McBain said of expediting the trial.

Blackman Township detectives arrested the former Army paratrooper in September after his 3-month-old daughter was raped and nearly beaten to death and detectives searched Coleman's Blackman Township apartment.

Earlier testimony indicated the girl was placed on life support at University of Michigan Hospital with bleeding on her brain and 17 bone fractures.

The girl lives with her maternal grandmother. Her mother, Ashley Rogers, is allowed visitations as part of an abuse-and-neglect case.

A divorce case also is pending. Rogers filed for divorce after Coleman was arrested and charged. The baby was born June 11, and the couple married two weeks later.

Defense attorney Dennis Hurst argued Tuesday that McBain should reinstate a \$100,000 bond set in District Court. McBain canceled the bond March 18, saying Coleman is charged with a brutal crime that didn't warrant bond.

Coleman, who served two tours in Iraq, attended every required court hearing in the months he was free, Hurst said.

"There was never a hint he had been using alcohol," Hurst said.

At a previous hearing, Hurst said Coleman blacked out on rum and painkillers every day and would awaken to discover bruises on his daughter.

Hurst recently requested testing on a blanket from the girl's crib. Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates told McBain it will take up to six weeks to get results from the crime lab. Apparently blood or bodily fluid on the blanket could yield DNA, she said.

McBain, saying six weeks is too long to wait, ordered the case to priority status.



Wednesday, April 2, 2008

## Ex-Oak Park teacher's case a mistrial

### Man accused in sex assault of two boys released on bond

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

**PONTIAC** -- After more than a week of deadlocked deliberations Tuesday, an Oakland Circuit judge declared a mistrial in the case of an ex-kindergarten teacher charged with sexually assaulting two boys, and released him on personal bond pending a new trial.

James Norman Perry, 34, of Ferndale is accused of first- and second-degree criminal sexual assault in October 2005 on two boys, 4 and 5 years old, in a special education classroom at Key Elementary School in Oak Park. A jury convicted him of the same crimes in 2006, but Judge Denise Langford-Morris tossed out that guilty verdict and ordered a new trial after defense attorneys found new witnesses to testify on Perry's behalf.

A lone holdout had stalled deliberations since last week, jurors reported.

Langford-Morris said Tuesday she did not consider Perry a danger to the community as she reduced his bond from \$100,000 cash to a personal bond, let him shed an electronic tether and modified other bond conditions upon the request of defense attorney Mitchell Ribitwer.

Langford-Morris also said she made the decisions after having talked with all the jurors, who told her Perry had a "low probability of conviction should he ever be tried again."

Oakland County's Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley said "that's pretty unusual for a judge to say something like that on a pending case," but added, "This has not been a normal case."

Carley, who said it would be a week or longer before a decision is made regarding the next step, noted "12 people in the first trial found him guilty." That jury deliberated five hours before reaching a verdict.

A pretrial hearing is set for May 22 before Langford-Morris, who has presided over the previous cases.

"We haven't discussed it with the assistant prosecutor or with the victims' mothers," said Carley. "We need to talk with them before any final decisions.

"These boys have had to testify two times already," she added. "It's traumatic. Nobody seems to remember that."

The News is not naming the mothers to protect the boys' identities. When one woman was asked by reporters outside the courtroom if she was prepared to return for yet another trial, she quickly replied: "Until death as many times as necessary for my son. As long as he wants me to come here."

Following a two-week trial and seven days of often-contentious deliberation, the jury in the most recent trial sent Langford-Morris a note saying they were unable to agree on Perry's guilt or innocence. It was the second such notice.

"We continue to find ourselves deadlocked," read the note, explaining the stalemate was caused by "differing opinions of which witnesses to believe in a case of conflicting testimony."

"We are unable to convince each other about which witnesses to believe. We find ourselves unable to reach a unanimous verdict."

Defense attorney Mitchell Ribitwer asked Langford-Morris to declare a mistrial.

"Based on the notes we have received I don't think it's fair to keep the jury in the jury room any longer," he told the judge.

A mistrial normally requires agreement from both sides. Assistant Prosecutor Andrea Dean left the decision up to Langford-Morris.

Shortly after noon, the judge recalled the jurors to the courtroom, thanked them for their diligence and sent them back into the jury room so she could meet with them, in private, one last time.

Jurors, including the man who was the lone holdout for over a week, left the courthouse and declined interviews with reporters.

In making the decisions to reduce Perry's bond requirements, Langford-Morris noted Perry's strong community ties -- including daily support in the courtroom from family, friends and fellow church members. The judge reduced Perry's daily reporting requirement for updates on his activities to a weekly notification.

Perry, on paid leave from Oak Park Schools, is still not permitted to reside in his home in Ferndale -- "as much for your sake," Langford-Morris told him -- but she permitted him to go home to remove personal belongings providing he notifies the court of his intentions.

Pending resolution of the charges, Perry may not have contact with children without a parent or adult supervising, and any employment he obtains must be cleared if there is a possibility that it might involve children.

Ribitwer also placed on the record that the alleged victims' mothers and the boys themselves sat through closing arguments in the trial. The mothers sat through the replay of testimony from several witnesses, he said.

Witnesses are normally excluded from courtrooms during the testimony of other witnesses so as not influence their own testimony or recollection of events.

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Wednesday, April 2, 2008

## Juror says it would be 'tragedy' to try Perry again

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

**PONTIAC** -- A member of the hung jury in the James Norman Perry case that was declared a mistrial this week said today it would be a tragedy to further prosecute the Ferndale man on charges he sexually assaulted two boys in October 2005.

The juror was one of 11 who wanted to acquit Perry; a lone juror held out for conviction.

"I feel bad for James Perry. This was a clear case of reasonable doubt," said the juror, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "We felt it was a waste of time and also of tax money to prosecute him. We told the judge 'you're not going to find 12 people to convict him if you do this 100 times.'"

Oakland County Circuit Judge Denise Langford-Morris on Tuesday declared a mistrial after jurors said they could not reach a unanimous verdict after a week of often-contentious deliberations.

Perry is still charged with the crimes, and prosecutors say it could be weeks before they decide whether to try him a third time. Perry, 34, of Ferndale, is accused of first- and second-degree criminal sexual assault in October 2005 on two boys, ages 4 and 5, in a special education classroom at Key Elementary School in Oak Park. A jury convicted him of the crimes in 2006, but Langford-Morris tossed out that guilty verdict and ordered a new trial after defense attorneys found new witnesses to testify on Perry's behalf.

Langford-Morris said Tuesday she did not consider Perry a danger to the community as she reduced his bond from \$100,000 cash to a personal bond, let him shed an electronic tether and modified other bond conditions upon the request of defense attorney Mitchell Ribitwer. Langford-Morris also said she made the decisions after having talked with all the jurors, who told her Perry had a "low probability of conviction should he ever be tried again."

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Carley, who said it would be a week or longer before a decision is made regarding the next step, noted "12 people in the first trial found him guilty." That jury deliberated five hours before reaching a verdict.

A pretrial hearing is set for May 22 before Langford-Morris, who has presided over the previous cases.

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## Mistrial declared

### Jury remained deadlocked after seven days of deliberation

By Ann Zaniewski

Journal Register News Service

PONTIAC -- Prosecutors say they haven't decided whether to retry James Perry, a kindergarten teacher accused of molesting two young boys, following the declaration of a mistrial.

Perry, 34, was accused of pulling two boys, ages 4 and 5, out of a lunch line at Oak Park's Key Elementary School in 2005 and sexually assaulting them in a special education room. A judge declared a mistrial after the jury sent a note Tuesday, the seventh day of jury deliberations, saying that the panel was still deadlocked.

Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley said prosecutors plan to talk to police, the mothers of the two alleged victims, and other key players in the case before deciding whether to move forward toward a third trial.

"We do have to look at what is in the best interest of the children," she said. "That's the one part of this case that seems to have been overlooked by many ...

"Has anything changed evidentiary, as far as in our position that we should proceed? No."

Perry was convicted of two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and two counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct in 2006, but Oakland Circuit Judge Denise Langford-Morris ordered another trial after the discovery of new witnesses.

Perry has repeatedly maintained his innocence. His defense attorneys pointed to the inconsistencies in some of the boys' statements and presented a handful of witnesses, including the school's special education teacher, who testified that the special education room where the alleged abuse had taken place was always occupied during the school day. The defense had also aired concerns that repeated questioning by the boys' mothers may have tainted their memories.

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Andrea Dean has said that the boys' statements about what happened to them remained consistent. One of her witnesses was the school principal, who said that she had assigned the special education students to eat lunch in another room. One of the boys' mothers said she was bringing her son lunch on Oct. 12, 2005, when she saw him coming from the area of the special education room, and that he later disclosed abuse to her.

Opening arguments began March 10. The two alleged victims -- who are now 7 and 8 -- were among the first witnesses to testify.

Jury deliberations began March 24. Jurors appeared to be deadlocked early on, sending the judge two notes the next day saying that they were unable to reach a unanimous verdict. A note on the following day indicated there was an 11-1 split on the jury, with other jurors believing the lone holdout was using illogical rationale and intentionally trying to hang the jury.

Jurors sent another note late Tuesday morning saying that they had carefully reviewed all of the evidence, but were torn on which witnesses to believe in instances when testimony conflicted.

"It's a huge disappointment," Mitchell Ribitwer, one of Perry's two defense attorneys, said.

Perry, following the advice of his lawyers, declined to comment to the media Tuesday.



After granting the defense's motion for a mistrial, Langford-Morris amended the conditions of Perry's bond, saying there's no reason to believe that he is a danger to the community. She set a personal bond and ordered his tether removed. Ribitwer said the tether had cost Perry several thousand dollars to maintain. Langford-Morris maintained the bond condition that prevents Perry from having contact with minors, and also said that Perry should not live at his house in Ferndale, which is near a school, though he will be allowed to stop by. Perry has been living with a relative in Berkley.

Based on what the jurors indicated, "there is a low probability of conviction" should Perry be retried again, Langford-Morris said.

Jurors left the courthouse Tuesday without commenting on the case to reporters.

The mistrial was a disappointment to both sides. The alleged victims' mothers, who are both 31 and declined to give their names, said they strongly believe in Perry's guilt, and that their sons started suddenly having behavioral problems around the time of the alleged abuse. Both mothers said they're ready for a third trial.

"It's not over," one woman said.

Earlier in the trial, Perry told The Oakland Press that he's taking things day-by-day, and relying on his faith to help him though. Perry kept a wooden cross in his pocket and occasionally leafed through a pocket-sized Bible.

"It's in God's hands," Perry said.

Several of Perry's fellow churchgoers from First Baptist Church of Ferndale sat through most of the trial.

Rev. Cathi Feldpausch, Perry's pastor, said she's sad the jury wasn't able to reach a decision, but that she still supports Perry and firmly believes in his innocence.

"He has a spirit of holiness about him," she said. "He is a man steeped in God."

Perry, who was born in Alaska, grew up in Hawaii and attended Michigan State University, taught first grade and kindergarten for eight years at another school before coming to Key Elementary. He said he loved watching students' skills progress throughout the year and being able to see that he had made a difference in their lives.

"Teaching was my passion," he said.

A handful of Perry's former teaching colleagues watched the trial and praised him as a good teacher.

"He was a workaholic," said Barbara Marshall, a retired teacher from Sterling Heights. "I'd scold him many times, 'Jim, stop working until 10 or 11 at night.'"

Perry is on a paid leave from the Oak Park School District. His future career plans -- and whether they involve teaching -- are unclear.

Perry's parents and other relatives also watched the trial.

"He's innocent," Perry's uncle, Randal Guigneaux said. "I dread him going through this thing again."

As jury deliberations wore on, the courtroom -- with Perry's supporters on one side and the boys' supporters on the other -- seemed to grow more tense. One of the boys' grandmothers was escorted by deputies out of the courtroom after making a comment in response to the declaration of a mistrial.

The alleged victims' mothers have been critical of the way the case has unfolded, saying Perry has been given preferential treatment both in the media and in the courtroom. Last

week, they told The Oakland Press that the experience has been difficult and the boys are in counseling.

"This has a life-long effect, not just what this man did to him, but this repeated questioning over and over," one mother said.

Carley, the county's chief deputy prosecutor, doesn't expect a decision to be reached on whether to retry Perry before next week.

Dean, who prosecuted the case, said earlier Tuesday that she was ready to proceed with another trial, but that the decision is ultimately up to county prosecutor David Gorcyca.

"There's no reason not to pursue the charges," Dean said.

Robyn Frankel, one of Perry's two defense attorneys, said: "It would be very tragic for everyone to do this again."

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## Child advocate to speak

Wednesday, April 02, 2008

HOLLAND -- A child welfare advocate will be the keynote speaker at an April 10 workshop that will help local organizations advocate for programs benefiting children and families. David Laird, a government affairs associate with Voices for America's Children, will speak at the half-day conference, to be held from 9 a.m. to noon at the Doubletree Hotel, 650 E. 24th St. Laird is expected to address several pieces of legislation facing Congress, including the reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which provides about \$100 million in funding to child-abuse prevention programs around the country. To register for the free conference or to get more information, call 396-7811 or (517) 492-2455.

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Michigan Report

March 28, 2008

## **APPEALS COURT ORDERS REFEREES TO USE CHILD CUSTODY 'BEST INTEREST' FACTORS**

An appeals decision released on Friday said that even though the law doesn't explicitly command them to use the best interest factors, court-appointed referees have the same requirements as judges to examine how child custody decisions are in the child's best interest.

The Court of Appeals reversed the custody decision handed down by a referee in the case of *Rivette v. Rose-Molina* ([COA docket No. 280922](#)) because not only did the referee fail to explain how giving custody to the mother was in the child's best interests, but the trial court also didn't look at the case's merits independent from the referee's decision and refused to do so upon the father's appeal.

Judges said that although case law doesn't expressly mandate that referees use the same factors as judges, "there is nothing in the custody law to suggest that a referee hearing, limited as it might be, absolves the referee of the responsibility to examine the best interest factors.

"It would stand to reason that, if an analysis of the best interest factors is required in the circuit court to assure that the custody determination is based upon an informed decision in the child's best interests, likewise, a referee's custody recommendation - which the court may uphold without making any independent findings - should include consideration of the factors," said the per curium decision, signed by Judges Deborah Servitto, Joel Hoekstra and Jane Markey.

Appellate judges reversed the order giving the mother custody and instructed the lower court to use the best interest factors "as if no prior determination had been made" to determine custody.

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Article published Apr 2, 2008

## Children pay for deadbeats

The story of Kathleen Cain of Niles and her three sons, reported in the March 9 Tribune by staff writer Carol Draeger, drives home what child support can mean to children.

Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox has collected more than \$50 million in back child support since 2003 when he kicked off a crackdown on deadbeat parents, the first statewide support enforcement initiative in the nation.

Among those targeted with a felony warrant for nonpayment was Cain's ex-husband, who lives in Florida. To avoid jail, he paid up -- a \$9,000 lump sum which allowed Cain and her sons to stay in the home they've lived in for more than a decade.

Losing their home or keeping it -- that's the difference the owed child support added up to for Cain's family.

Scott Teter, a former Cass County prosecutor who's currently running for judge in the county, helped beef up Michigan's child support effort through enforcement of felony charges against nonpayers and an extradition fund to reel in lawbreakers. The results refute the popular notion that all deadbeat parents are so broke they aren't worth pursuing. The state has collected from building contractors, investment bankers, a brain surgeon and professional athletes.

The attorney general's effort is separate from collections through Michigan's Department of Human Services which last year distributed \$1.7 billion in child support.

In Indiana, St. Joseph County too points to the success of more aggressive efforts to collect child support. Last year, the county experienced the largest increase in annual child support collections in the state.

Collections for 2007 totaled more than \$26 million, up more than 8 percent over the previous year. And because 95 percent of the county's 23,000 open cases involve children who receive some type of public assistance, it's not just a family matter.

Still, St. Joseph County collected and distributed just 47 percent of current child support due last year. While new enforcement tools may be making a difference for some families, they clearly are not the salvation of the majority of children whose noncustodial parents won't or can't support them. These children begin life doubly disadvantaged: deprived of both a parent and a decent standard of living. And society is the poorer.

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### By the numbers

Indiana last year collected and distributed 55 percent of the \$699,537,100 in current child support due. Just \$151 million of the \$2.4 billion in arrearages was distributed. The number of children in cases open at the end of the fiscal year was 379,778.

In Michigan, 62 percent of the \$1.7 billion due in current support was collected and distributed. Arrearages totaled \$9.2 billion, of which \$409 million was collected and distributed. The number of children in cases open at the end of the fiscal year in Michigan was 967,524.

# THE DAILY Reporter

Print this story

## BISD to apply for \$1.5m grant to run Head Start

Print Page

By Don Reid-Staff Writer

COLDWATER — The Branch Intermediate School District (BISD) will apply for a \$1.5 million federal grant to fund Head Start for the 2008-09 fiscal year.

Early Childhood Education Director Linda George noted in her application for trustee approval that "there is no expected increase in funding from Head Start, however costs continue to rise for wage step increases, increase in the Michigan minimum wage, health insurance costs, fuel and other energy costs and for repairing busses that cannot currently be replaced due to lack of available funding."

The budget means less of a chance for the 65 employees BISD Educational Support Staff (ESP) union, which has been trying to negotiate a pay raise for employees for almost two years.

Director George informed the trustees, in her written application, "this budget projects no wage or benefit increase for Head Start staff for the 2008-09 fiscal year except for the required increase in the Michigan minimum wage and accompanying payroll taxes, for predicted increases in health insurance costs and the change in the Michigan School Employee retirement rate."

In the last two years, when the minimum wage was increased by federal action, only employees receiving the old minimum wage received a raise. No other employees received any raises, according to a member of the negotiating team. That group will again met with BISD administration this week.

The member of the team, who asked that her name not be used wrote, "We have been told that the reason we don't make the same as other BISD employees is because we are not as educated, although we have employees with master's, bachelor's and associate degrees in early education. We have employee's working in this program for 20 years making the same wage as someone who has been here two years."

George noted in her application that Head Start will require 50 percent of Head Start teachers to hold bachelor's degrees by 2013. Twelve percent currently meet that requirement. The program will have to find a way to meet that requirement — possibly with higher education partnerships.

George said moving from a leased office space to the center on South Fremont, rented from Coldwater Schools, will save some money. Other costs will be saved by holding open vacant positions, reducing personnel costs where possible, reductions in supply accounts, reducing transportation services and such things as cutting field trips.

The director is also proposing another change in Head Start with elimination of some of the full-day programs. The current program has 36 full-day slots and 209 half-day slots for students. In the new proposal 20 will be full-day and 225 half-day for the 245 funded by the grant.

Fewer people requested full-day programs as the economy in the area slumped and the county saw 80 percent of state child care subsidies go to family or relative daycare providers rather than licensed centers and child care homes.

During the recent federal review, the program has to substantiate its \$390,762 in matching funds some of which is in-kind services. BISD Business Manager Gary Crandall said there was enough to meet federal requirements.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Full-time kindergarten can help at-risk kids

Wednesday, April 02, 2008

For decades, educators have been studying the impact of full-day kindergarten on

future student achievement,

especially on children from low-income families.

The conclusion has been near-unanimous: Full-day kindergarten better prepares students for a successful first grade, which, in turn, increases the odds for success in school as they get older.

That's why we applaud the decision of Kalamazoo Public Schools -- where two-thirds of students come from homes poor enough to qualify for free or reduced lunches -- to implement full-day kindergarten in all of its elementary schools, starting next fall.

Many children from low-income families are at risk of academic failure and are often trailing their peers by the time they get to kindergarten. Such children often have parents who did not succeed in school, have not been read to by adults, have little access to books, high-quality child care or cultural activities. They come to kindergarten unprepared to learn.

The U.S. Department of Education in 2004 published a survey of national studies, as well as an in-depth study of select school districts in Indiana, to gauge the impact of full-day kindergarten on student achievement, especially among at-risk children.

The conclusion: "The studies involving academic achievement, grade retention, special education referrals, and social and behavioral effects generally support the effectiveness of full day over half day programs. Disadvantaged students in full day kindergarten were also found to experience greater academic benefits than students in half day programs," although the size of the benefit varied from study to study.

It will cost Kalamazoo Public Schools an additional \$1.9 million in federal funding to implement full-day kindergarten. That money will have to come from the \$6 million in federal Title I funding the district already receives for extra educational services for at-risk children, which means other programs for those children will receive less funding.

But full-day kindergarten is likely to pay off in the long run, if studies are accurate.

And it is a good fit with the Great Start Collaborative, a group of educators, early childhood specialists, health care providers and others who want to improve the odds for children between birth and 5 years old.

If every Kalamazoo Public School student is to be able to go to college, full-time kindergarten makes sense to help those who will need it the most.

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April 1, 2008

## **S.F.A. NOTES SLOWER GROWTH IN MEDICAID COSTS**

Michigan's Medicaid costs will top \$9 billion for the first time this year, but despite the pressure the prescription drug program for low income families has put on other parts of the budget, it likely would have been far worse without cost containment programs that began back in the mid-1990s, the Senate Fiscal Agency concludes in a recent report.

Even with the onset in 2006 of the new federal Medicare drug program, which some had predicted would result in higher costs to the state than it would see in savings by the shift of several thousand cases from Medicaid programs, total spending for prescription drug programs have remained relatively steady the last three years, the [report](#) said.

Total prescription drug costs since the Medicare program went into effect have been 4.9 percent increase in 2005-06 and 4.1 percent in 2006-07, when it rose to \$984.4 million. That included the Medicare program, fee for service cases and managed care or HMO cases.

"When compared with the large escalations in pharmaceutical expenditures in Michigan between 2000 and 2005, these year-to-year increases appear quite restrained," the report said. It credited a variety of cost-containment initiatives, including a multi-state pooling agreement for fee for service cases, a preferred product list and a prescription drug monitoring program for mental health patients.

The Medicare benefit limited the state's ability to expand its cost-containment efforts because of provisions requiring the state to reimburse the federal government for the approximate costs it would have incurred under the Medicaid program had the new benefit not been enacted. Those reimbursement costs have risen to \$178.2 million in 2007-08 from \$127.5 million in 2005-06. The state also has to account for the loss of federal revenues for its share of the Medicaid program for those cases now covered by the Medicare benefit.

One of the biggest successes was in the pharmaceutical fee for service program, where cost increases have been in the low single digits for the last four years, and dropped to a negligible .6 percent growth rate in 2006-07, following four years which increases ranged from almost 12 percent to over

45 percent. That program accounts for \$680.1 million (with the Medicare benefit costs included) of the overall \$9.2 billion Medicaid spending for the current year.

The 2003 pooling agreement with Vermont (and now with six other states) to obtain additional discounts from pharmaceutical companies generated \$18 million in rebates last year and was a factor in generic drugs representing 55 percent of the total for Medicaid recipients and 90 percent generally, the SFA report said.

It said cost constraints were less notable for HMOs, whose prescription drug costs in 2006-07 increased by 10.4 percent over the prior year (and 26.9 percent over 2004-05) to \$325.6 million. The SFA report acknowledged increased caseloads were also a factor in prescription drug cost increases, but said the rising cost of drugs was the primary reason for the overall increase. The HMOs have their own cost containment formularies, but do not benefit from the pooling agreement.



## Boomers Adult day care can give caregivers a break, as well as helping aging spouses, parents

By MELISSA KOSSLER DUTTON  
For The Associated Press

When Dick Lundgren realized that caring for his wife was taking a toll on his own health, he turned to adult day care.

Lundgren, who lives south of Seattle, found a program that catered to patients with Alzheimer's disease and made arrangements for his wife, Dorothee, to go there two days a week.

The break was good for both of them, said Lundgren, whose wife was diagnosed with the progressive brain disease seven years ago. He recently placed her in a group home that provides round-the-clock care to six residents.

"I firmly believe, looking back, that (day care) gave me a chance to keep my wife home a year longer," the 61-year-old said.

Finding the right adult day care center can offer respite to caregivers while offering their charges a chance to socialize and take part in supervised activities. Facilities vary from those that focus on medical care to those that are mostly recreational, offering games, gardening or crafts.

There are about 3,500 providers across the country, according to industry experts, who say the number grows annually. In recent years, churches, nursing homes and national franchises have opened day care centers.

Medicaid or private insurance occasionally will pay for the care, which can range in price from \$31 a day to \$130 a day. The average cost is about \$61 a day, according to the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, in Washington. Many facilities offer a sliding scale based on income.

Deciding what works best for your family requires doing some homework, said Elinor Ginzler of the AARP, the senior advocacy group.

- First, decide whether the older person needs a health-based program staffed with medical professionals. Even a more recreational center should have a nurse or doctor on staff. Patients with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's or other chronic health conditions probably require a center that focuses on care.
- The AARP or local Area Agency on Aging should have a list of providers. Only about 6 percent of adult day-care centers are accredited, but most are inspected by state agencies, said Peter Notarstefano of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. Practices and policies vary by state, but the inspection records should be available for review, Ginzler said.
- Visit the facility to meet the staff and ask about its training policies, experts advise. Watch the interactions between staff and clients, the quality of the programs, and the cleanliness of eating areas and bathrooms.

"See how engaged people are," said Donna Schempp, a program director at the Family Caregiver Alliance in San Francisco.

"Are they sitting around in wheelchairs and being ignored or are people trying to engage them in different kinds of activities?"

The workers should seem interested in their elderly charges and treat them kindly, said Lundgren, a board member of Washington Elder Care, a group working to create a local day health program geared to dementia patients.

"It's always the people and their attitude and their commitment to their work," he said.

- Ask to see a schedule of activities. If possible, come back for an unscheduled visit during an activity your loved one might enjoy, and see how it's run.

Mealtime also is a good time to visit and see how workers treat clients, said Notarstefano.

- Look for a center that satisfies the caregiver's needs as well as the loved one. Most centers serve lunch, but many provide other services, including transportation or medical screenings. Some may offer bathing services and transportation to doctor's appointments.
- Find out whether the center takes field trips, uses volunteers or invites in children for special programs, said Ginzler.

"Adult day centers should encourage and promote opportunities to engage in the world around them," she said. "That should include bringing the world in and going out into the world."

- Find out whether the staff will help participants use the restroom, and how they handle episodes of incontinence, suggested Nora Gibson, executive director of ElderHealth Northwest, in Seattle.

"Many older adults need assistance or reminders to go to the bathroom," she said. "You don't want anyone to have the humiliation of going home in wet pants or a wet dress."

- Find out what type of training the center requires for employees and whether it provides ongoing training. Centers should continue to train staff for the duration of their employment, Ginzler said.
- Many centers will help families introduce the idea of day care to their loved ones. Directors often suggest stressing the opportunities for socialization and organized activities. Many will invite the potential participant in for a meal or activity. Others encourage seniors to try out the facility for a week or two.

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## Boomers Some questions to ask when choosing an adult day-care facility

By The Associated Press

stions to ask before choosing an adult day care:

1. How much does the program cost? Is there a sliding scale? Is there grant money available? Are veterans eligible for any funding?
2. Is transportation provided? How long will my loved one be on the bus?
3. How long does the average employee stay on the job? (High staff turnover can signal problems with the program.)
4. May I contact a current client? (If so, then ask that person for a list of the facility's pros and cons, whether they would recommend it to a friend, and if they've seen changes in their loved one since they started attending.)
5. Do you have any strategies to help me introduce the idea of day care to my loved one?
6. What is your staff to client ratio? (The national average is 1 to 7.)
7. Do you manage clients' medication while they are here?
8. What kind of food do you serve? Can you accommodate special dietary restrictions?

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# Adding food-stamp payment does no good

[Jackson Citizen Patriot](#) Letters

April 02, 2008 09:59AM

*SANDSTONE TOWNSHIP* — In regard to having certain recipients receive their food-stamp money twice a month, do some people have too much time on their hands?

A lot of the people who receive food stamps have no income or a limited income, and no transportation. Now we want them to endure one more hardship of finding and paying for transportation for another trip to the large grocery store.

I believe what might happen is that these people will go to the nearest neighborhood store that accepts food stamps and pay more for the product, thus getting less bang for the buck. As for getting healthier foods, I think most people are worried about the staples, no matter how they get paid.

I worked for the first major discount grocery store in Jackson. Trust me, if anyone thinks they will add hours or employees because of this change in food stamps, I have a bridge for sale.

— *Wes Pelton*



# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Dial a ride, get to work

Wednesday, April 02, 2008

By Ryan J. Stanton

[rstanton@bc-times.com](mailto:rstanton@bc-times.com) | 894-9645

There's a new taxi service in town, and it's using state funds to give anyone stuck without a car - or a license - a ride to work.

Teri Christian of Pinconning is using it to get to and from her job at Cottage Inn Pizza in Bay City.

Troy Monville of Bay City is using it to get to and from his 12-hour shifts at S.C. Johnson. in Bangor Township.

And Bill Mavis of Hampton Township used the service to get to his third-shift duty at Michigan Sugar Co. in Monitor Township - up until he was laid off for the season.

"I was using it from the end of November until the end of March," said Mavis, who doesn't have a driver's license. "It was really reliable. They were here every night at the time they were supposed to be - it was a good experience."

The expanded Dial-a-Ride service is part of a new get-to-work program implemented by the Bay Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The transit agency is contracting with AAA Taxi, 1000 Center Ave., to provide cab rides for early-morning and late-night commuters - during hours when Bay Metro buses aren't running.

Michael R. Stoner, Bay Metro general manager, said the idea is to make sure a lack of transportation is not an impediment to anybody's right to work in Bay County.

"I don't expect there's ever going to be hundreds of people a day doing this, but for a dozen people a day who need a ride to work, it's a good thing for them to be employed," he said.

Tim Banaszak, co-owner of AAA Taxi, said there's a roster of about 850 people who have taken advantage of the service since it began in October.

"We're giving out around 60 rides a week, and we're looking for more," he said.

"Some days we've got a whole bunch of them and some days we have none. Usually, they're at 10 o'clock or 8 o'clock at night."

The shuttles cost commuters \$1 per ride, while Bay Metro picks up the rest of the tab - using grant dollars provided through the Michigan Department of Transportation's Job Access Reverse Commute Program.

With a \$40,000 JARC grant in hand this year, Bay Metro has expanded Dial-a-Ride services into the early morning and evening hours Mondays through Saturdays, and throughout the day on Sundays when Bay Metro is closed.

Stoner said the JARC service has been meeting a big need in the community, with clients being referred by local employment agencies. He's hopeful it's helping some low-income county residents transition off welfare and into the work force. Meanwhile, it's also meeting the needs of people with disabilities, including clients from New Dimensions.

Dial-a-Ride services are available by calling 894-0631.

The services, until now, had been open only to senior citizens and the disabled, running from 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, and from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Saturdays.

While those services continue, the JARC program provides an option to those in need of a job-related ride, including for child care, education and training related to work.

Stoner said he's hopeful that state funding will continue and the program will grow.

Banaszak said he supports that notion, and he thinks users of the service will say the same.

"They're very grateful," he said. "A lot of the people that we transport have lost their driving privileges or don't have a vehicle, and they're very happy that this grant is available for them so they can get to work."

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## Homeless housing program to expand

Wednesday, April 02, 2008

By Steve Gunn

[sgunn@muskegonchronicle.com](mailto:sgunn@muskegonchronicle.com)

MUSKEGON COUNTY -- A federally funded program that provides rental assistance for disabled homeless people is expanding again, creating more opportunities for qualified residents to get a roof over their heads and a new lease on life.

Muskegon County commissioners, meeting Tuesday as the human resources committee, voted to allow Muskegon County Community Mental Health to accept two similar grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide rental assistance for the homeless.

One grant will provide \$94,392 to cover rental payments for one year for 16 housing units with one bedroom and two housing units with two bedrooms.

The other grant will provide \$15,228 to cover rental payments for one year for three single-bedroom units.

Both grants are based on the HUD-defined fair market rate of \$423 per month for single-bedroom units and \$549 per month for two-bedroom units.

The rental assistance program for homeless people with disabilities -- officially named the Muskegon County Supportive Housing Project -- has been in existence for about three years, according to John North, director of CMH.

It was established to find housing for a few of the many homeless people in Muskegon County with severe disabilities or chronic substance abuse problems, according to North.

HUD funds the program on a year-to-year basis. It originally paid for 15 rental units, expanded to 18, and this year will expand even further to 21.

The rental units are scattered throughout the community, having been picked by the tenants themselves, often with assistance from CMH, North said. Officials are already in the process of filling the three new openings with clients, he said.

"We have no trouble finding people who are eligible for the program," North said. "We could use more slots.

"We try to get them housing, get them settled and provide support and therapy. Over time, many of them become eligible for Social Security and Medicaid. Then we try to graduate them into more permanent housing that they can afford."

The program has been successful, North said. Many former tenants have improved their lives and moved on, creating space for other people who need the same kind of help, he said.

And the success of the program will probably guarantee continued HUD funding in the future, probably for an increased number of units, North said.

But North also admitted the poor economy is creating candidates for subsidized housing faster than the need can be met.

"There are hundreds of people in the county that need good, affordable housing along with supports (from social service agencies)," he said.

April 1, 2008

## **MOST OF STATE SEES** **UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASES**

Of the 17 labor markets in the state, 13 saw unemployment rates increase in February, the Department of Labor and Economic Growth reported Tuesday. But the department characterized most of the changes, up and down, as minor.

"Labor markets in February displayed typical seasonal employment patterns," said Rick Waclawek, director of the Bureau of Labor Market Information & Strategic Initiatives. "However, regional jobless rates have edged upward over the prior year."

Holding its traditional position, the Ann Arbor area had the lowest unemployment for the month at 5 percent, though that was up from 4.8 percent in January and 4.6 percent in February 2007.

The highest unemployment was in Northeast Lower Michigan, at 13 percent, which was also up from 12.4 percent in January and 12.3 percent in February 2007.

Northeast Lower Michigan shared the honor of largest unemployment increase, .6 percentage point, with Northwest Lower Michigan. The latter region saw 9.8 percent unemployment in February, up from 9.2 percent in January and in February 2007.

The largest drop in unemployment was in Detroit-Warren-Livonia, which fell to 7.7 percent from 8.2 percent in January. But that was still higher than the 7.2 percent in February 2007.

Flint (to 9.3 percent from 9.5 percent), Monroe County (to 7.6 percent from 8 percent) and Saginaw (to 8.1 percent from 8.2 percent) also saw their unemployment rates fall for the month.

Every region had higher unemployment in February than it did the same month the preceding year.

Among the counties, Mackinac County had the highest unemployment at 23.2 percent, while Washtenaw had the lowest at 5 percent.

The report also noted that all of the unemployment figures released for 2007 had been revised with new figures posted at

<http://www.michigan.gov/lmi>. It also noted that the U.S. Department of Labor, because of budget cuts, was not collecting nonfarm payroll from the

65 smallest labor markets, which includes the Bay City and Monroe County markets, and was not publishing any wage and hours data.

April 1, 2008

## **SPADE: D.H.S. BUDGET SHOULD MOVE AFTER BREAK**

The 2008-09 budget for the Department of Human Services, left undone before the House broke for a two-week scheduled break, should be ready to go when lawmakers return next week, [Rep. Dudley Spade](#) (D-Franklin Twp.), chair of the Appropriations Human Services Subcommittee said Tuesday.

Mr. Spade said with the chamber moving out so many budgets before its recess, some questions were raised about the House's largest originating budget, but those have been answered over the break.

The budget will remain largely unchanged from the version reported out by the House Appropriations Committee, he said, with no changes to the staffing levels of the department.

Mr. Spade classified the boilerplate changes as "cosmetic," and said he didn't expect the budget to be controversial when the full chamber takes the bill up. [HB 5814](#) totals \$4.6 billion (\$1.3 billion in general funds), which is a 1.3 percent increase in general fund spending for the current fiscal year.

The budget would cut 60 staff positions in juvenile justice facilities (30 from the state's medium security facility, 20 from central staff in the Bureau of Juvenile Justice and 10 from the Flint House community juvenile justice center, which the department has already planned to close). The action would net savings to the general fund totaling \$4.1 million, with gross savings of \$6.2 million.

Savings from those staffing reductions will go toward hiring employees in other parts of the DHS budget. That would include 64 new DHS field staff, three new staff in the interstate compact unit (which oversees interstate child placements) and five new staff in the foster care and adoption contract monitoring division. Hiring those new people will cost \$5.4 million gross, \$3.2 million of that in general funds.

The budget also includes the hiring of 12 new licensing staff to the bureau that handles background checks, which is higher than the governor's recommended five new employees. Those hirings will cost \$1.3 million gross, \$1 million in general funds.

Michigan Report

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CAPITAL NOTEBOOK

## RECALLING YOURSELF?

[Rep. Dudley Spade](#) (D-Franklin Twp.) had some fun on Tuesday, April Fool's Day, by sending out a faux press release announcing his efforts to recall himself.

It starts, "Citing his perfect voting record and instrumental role in the reform of the Department of Human Services (DHS) budget last year, which resulted in an \$80 million savings to the state, the Lenawee County legislator declared himself unfit for public office and announced that his would be the first signature on the petition.

"Getting elected is difficult enough and getting recalled will be even tougher, especially in a non-general election," Mr. Spade said in his tongue-in-cheek statement. "But I am confident that I can get my name on the ballot and rally enough support and/or opposition to get myself recalled. I call on all of my supporters to oppose me and my detractors to support me. Together, we can't not lose."

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Ismael Ahmed



Nancy Schlichting

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## Guest commencement speakers chosen for April ceremonies

**By: Halston Herrera**

**Posted: 4/1/08**

The University of Michigan-Dearborn has announced its guest speakers for its winter commencement that will be held Sunday, April 27.

Ismael Ahmed, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, and Nancy Schlichting, president and CEO of the Henry Ford Health System, will be the honored speakers.

"These two speakers have set an outstanding example with their leadership and commitment to serving the people of the metropolitan region," said Chancellor Daniel Little of the university's choices.

"We know that their insights will add a great deal of meaning to this celebration for our graduates and their families."

Schlichting will speak in the School of Management and College of Engineering and Computer Science ceremony, held at 10:30 a.m.

Ahmed will speak in the School of Education and College of Arts, Sciences and Letters ceremony at 2:30 p.m.

Schlichting has several years in health administration. In addition to her current position within the health system, she previously held the vice president and chief operating officer positions.

Schlichting is also an active member on numerous community and professional boards, such as the Michigan Health and Hospital Association.

Schlichting received her undergraduate education from Duke University, and a master's in business administration from Cornell University.

Ahmed is an alumnus of UM-D. He received a bachelor's degree from the university in 1975. He has also served on the UM-D Citizens Advisory Committee.

Ahmed was appointed by Governor Jennifer Granholm as the director of the Health Services department in September of 2007.

He is also one of the founders of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in the early 1970s. He was appointed as executive director in 1983.

Each ceremony will also feature a selected student speaker.